

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJ: GERMAN INTEREST IN SOUTH AFRICAN URANIUM ENRICHMENT
PROCESS

SUMMARY: SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 23 THAT WEST GERMAN ENERGY CONCERN IN PROCESS NEGOTIATING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES RE POSSIBLE COOPERATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN URANIUM ENRICHMENT PROCESS. DR. ROUX, PRESIDENT OF SA ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD, REFUSED TO CONFIRM OR DENY REPORT BUT SAID ON SEPARATE OCCASION THAT SAG WOULD LIKE COOPERATION FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IN DEVELOPING PROCESS. ROUX ALSO URGED MOVING AHEAD ON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT.

1. LOCAL PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 23 THAT WEST GERMAN FUEL ENERGY CONCERN NEGOTIATING WITH SOUTH AFRICA RE POSSIBLE COOPERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S URANIUM ENRICHMENT PROCESS. CITING BONN MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AS SOURCE, RAND DAILY MAIL STATED THAT ESSENER STEINKOHLN ELEKTRIZITAET AG (STEAG), SUBSIDIARY OF RUHR KOHLE AG, IS SEEKING ESTABLISH COMMISSION (PRESUMABLY JOINT) TO TEST ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF SA ENRICHMENT PROCESS. MAIL ALSO QUOTED UNNAMED BONN "EXPERT" AS INDICATING SOUTH
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AFRICAN PROCESS COULD TURN OUT CHEAPER THAN OTHER ENRICHMENT

TECHNIQUES AND RESULTANT PRODUCT LIKELY HAVE MILITARY AS WELL AS PEACEFUL ENERGY POTENTIAL.

2. GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR NUCLEAR PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES AT KARLSRUHE HAS BEEN FOLLOWING SA NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS AND, REPORTEDLY, HAS BEEN COOPERATING WITH STEAG RE LATTER'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICANS. HEAD OF INSTITUTE, PROFESSOR E. W. BECKER, REPORTED BY MAIL AS SAYING THAT SA PROCESS APPARENTLY REQUIRES CAPITAL INVESTMENT ONLY TWO-THIRDS THAT OF GASOUS DIFFUSION PLANT.

3. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT, DR. A. J. A. ROUX, PRESIDENT OF SA ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD, SAID AUGUST 21 THAT IN ORDER EXPLOIT SA TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND NUCLEAR RESOURCES WITHIN REASONABLE TIME FRAME, FOREIGN COOPERATION ESSENTIAL. ADDRESSING GROUP JOHANNESBURG AFRIKAANER BUSINESSMEN, ROUX REITERATED EARLIER REMARKS THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD LIKE SUITABLE PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING ITS ENRICHMENT PROCESS BUT THAT SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY WOULD HAVE TO BE HANDLED IN EXTREMELY RESPONSIBLE MANNER.

4. ROUX ALSO WENT ON PUBLIC RECORD FAVORING GO AHEAD ON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT. (GOVERNMENT DECIDED EARLIER THIS YEAR DELAY POWER PLANT ON ECONOMIC GROUNDS ALTHOUGH AUTHORIZING SCOM NUCLEAR POWER TEAM TO CONTINUE STUDIES ON ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY.)

5. QUERIED RE STEAG NEGOTIATIONS, ROUX NOTED THAT IT MATTER OF PRINCIPLE NEVER TO CONFIRM OR DENY PRESS REPORTS ALLEGING DISCUSSIONS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS OR BUSINESS CONCERNS.

SMITH

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